

Sketch

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"Smirch or besmirched, motherfucker," Gideon yelled, punctuating the fucker behind the mother with an elbow drop to my peacefully inhaling midsection. Mission aborted halfway through and unsuccessful, the in became an ex and I haled explosively and with extreme prejudice in his general direction.

He rolled off my traumatized torso and knocked over the alarm clock that he had made obsolete with his violent and full-bodied alarm. Man taking over for machine, it was the overthrow of the Industrial Revolution and it was taking place in this very living room, on a couch that could - in the near future if said revolution marched on without delay - soon be replaced by a stooping and benevolent rotund person. Besides ample bearing, patience would also have to be a factor in the new couchperson's job skills. Ninja like technique if not physique, although in times of disuse it seemed an additional incentive that the furniture fill-in could eat the crumbs that fell into his or her crevices. The whole set up seemed a bit creepy, so I took the time to appreciate my makeshift inanimate bed while I had the chance, then I addressed the awkwardly worded, yet clever, rousting cry.

With Webster's-like precision, I smirched on command. I began by sullyng the integrity of the couch's fabric with a restless nights' sinus accumulation. Without breaking eye contact with Gideon and his stupid, stoned squint, I plugged up my left nostril with a casual middle finger and trajected (with even more prejudice and in even more extreme quantities) a decent bolus of snot onto the armrest on which he was sitting. Soiling, spotting, and/or smudging a surface complete, I went for extra points and offhandedly tarnished Gideon's good name with a quip about how he'd survived the abortion attempt by his incredibly obese and morally casual mother.

I don't remember the exact put down but, fuck it, it was early in the morning and I'd risen to the challenge placed immediately in front of me. I'd called Gideon's bluff, I'd sunk his battleship and now it was apparent that although he was will-

ing to overlook the verbal insult, the smear upon the furniture would have to be unsmirched if I wanted to keep the ragged couch as a place to lie my weary head any further into the foreseeable future.

Truthfully, my inability to visualize this intangible future (save for far out musings about couch people and utopias where forest creatures and incredibly sexy humans frolicked symbiotically with nary a television in sight) was what had landed me in this temporary haven to begin with.

Several weeks ago I had been unable to visualize with any responsible clarity how three hundred dollars deposited in a certain slot next to a highly unremarkable washing machine would secure a one bedroom apartment for another 29 to 31 days, depending on the specific month inhabited within the fussy confines of the Gregorian calendar. Being November, the correct answer is 30 days, Bob. Being November, it was also fucking cold out, especially if one resided within the geographic confines of the Mid Northern United States. As it so happened, I did. Deer River, Minnesota if one wanted to bring the arbitrary borders of nationstates into this, but I didn't. Not this morning.

On this particular collective illusion that English speakers call Tuesday, I just wanted to fucking sleep. To reinsert myself in the lumpy divot that had sagged to approximate an outline of my own essence and cease to be cognizant of the buzz kill that was the real world. I wanted my dream about swimming through Australian canals and looking for platypi back. I wanted my real limbs to be useless and my imagined appendages to propel me toward the misunderstood monotreme and when I arrived in front of it I wanted it to speak.

I imagine that it would have a gruff and comforting voice like that of my high school biology teacher and in this familiar timbre it would tell me about its experience with electrolocation like only it could. Of course this is because the platypus is the only animal that can locate prey by sensing the electric fields produced by muscular contractions. Lesson finished, it would lay a few leathery eggs and politely ask me to leave.

This would have been the obvious and most refreshing way to wake up, gently shooed away by a benevolent semi-aquatic mammal and ushered into the waking world with a sense of camaraderie and adventure. I wanted that, but since Gideon and his blundering restlessness had sealed off that particular aspiration, I wanted a cigarette instead.

My newfound homelessness had made me resourceful and extremely unfettered. I carried most of my possessions on me at all times so it was at once satisfying

and convenient to reach into the jacket that lay against my arm and remove a yellow lighter and a back of Doral cigarettes. Ultra-lights. 100's.

As I pulled them out, I waited for Gideon to bum one. Bum one off a bum. Bum bum ditty bumbumbumbumbbbbbbbum prrrrrrrrrr tsss. While lighting up, I performed an elaborate drum solo with thought syllables in my head. After the cymbal hiss and in the middle of a highly overrated inhale, I absentmindedly used a restless finger to wipe my phlegm off the armrest.

I hadn't noticed that Gideon had been staring, rather manically in fact, at the spot on the couch during my whole cigarette lighting display and related musings. Once I cleaned the area though, he refiled the incident from the 'reasons to hold a grudge' portion of his brain into the 'taken care of' sector.

Gideon was odd in that he could flip rage on and off at a moments notice for the most insignificant details. I chalked it up to heavy drug use and disenchantment with the big picture. It was all in the details, for both of us. Perhaps that's why we got along. But it's best not to think on things like that – the interconnections between people and the reasons they exist. Too much social contemplation and you're tied up with everyone. No soul. No personality. No individualism. Like some sort of Ayn Randish nightmare, or novel (but weren't they the same thing?). Haha! Deadbeat couch-sleeper 1, dead philosopher 0.

Since shelter was taken care of for the time being, I had inhaled a little oxygen with my cancer, and hydration levels seemed in check - I consulted with Maslow for the next order of business. Food, he suggested. Cereal, I agreed - and did my best impression of a platypus waddle towards the kitchen.